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NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

NSWALC Welcomes Aboriginal Electoral Reform

May 15, 2009

The New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council has welcomed the Federal Government's decision to provide an extra $13 million in funding to the Australian Electoral Commission to improve the electoral enrolment and participation of Aboriginal people.

The Special Minister of State, Senator John Faulkner, says the funding is designed to close the gap in areas of Aboriginal disadvantage by improving the electoral enrolment and participation of the first Australians.

The money would be allocated over the next four years to enable the AEC to improve electoral knowledge in communities through a continuous program of electoral education.

NSWALC Chairperson Bev Manton says the state's peak representative body called on the Federal Government to re-establish an Indigenous Electoral Information and Education Service through the AEC in a recent written submission to the NSW Legislative Council Social Issues Committee on Aboriginal Disadvantage.

Councillor Manton says the submission pointed out the Howard Government had abolished the service which was run by the AEC in its first budget.

The highly acclaimed program, which was operated at a cost of little more than $2 million a year, had never been restored.

Councillor Manton said the restoration of such a service would be welcomed by Aboriginal people throughout NSW and elsewhere.

Senator Faulkner has announced communities will be consulted to determine the most appropriate education and enrolment activities for each local area and to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the program.

A set up phase will begin in the coming financial year.

This will include consultation with Aboriginal and other bodies by February 2010, and the identification and recruitment of Aboriginal field staff and agents from March next year.

Full commencement of the program will begin in July next year.

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